

Gone but not forgotten

The changing position of Australian tourism in the developments of Ypres, Belgium



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Thesis

“Gone but not forgotten”

The changing position of Australian tourism in the developments of
Ypres, Belgium

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I hereby declare that this thesis is wholly the work of Anne Valk. Any other contributors or sources have either been referenced in the prescribed manner or are listed in the acknowledgements together with the nature and the scope of their contribution.

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They all helped me to learn and grow to be ready for the next step in my life.

Anne Valk

's-Hertogenbosch, December 2014

Executive summary

This thesis was being conducted to give insight into the main research question:

“To what extent is Australian tourism in Ypres expected to change as from 2018 onward?”

Typification:

“Ypres started as a ghost town after the war, developed into a touristic area for 45+ers who are willing to commemorate and learn about history.

The monuments and museums display a quiet and international atmosphere where not only remembrance activities find place but where people have the possibility to learn about history.”

Ypres is called the city of peace. This ancient town located in the south-west of the Belgium is officially called Ieper. Ypres was rural from origin but during the First World War this city became the center of battles between Germany and the Allied forces because of its strategic position. Ypres was the place where five battlefields took place during the war.

Approximately half a million people past away in the trenches around and the victims included soldiers from all over the world such as British, Australians, Canadians, Indians, South Africans and New Zealanders.

At the end of the war, this city was totally ruined and in 1918 the last citizens were mandatory evacuated. From this moment on, Ypres was seen as a ghost town. After the war, Ypres became a destination for battlefield tourism, as the country’s historical remembrance site.

Today, 35.000 inhabitants are living in Ypres that highlights the small scale of the city. In the last thirty years tourism to Ypres is increasing, attracting 370.000 visitors yearly and expecting to welcome up to 500.000 visitors during the 100-year remembrance between 2014 and 2018. Family members of different forces are visiting the site to imagine and share the sufferings but also many others are attracted to Ypres. It is a place where people from around the world come to learn about the history or to commemorate their forefathers.

The awareness in Australia is growing about the Western Front while the position of the Australian visitor in Ypres is not well understood. Out of the Commonwealth countries, Australia is the most active when it comes to commemoration.

A big group of people want to keep the story of the First World War alive and the development process in this area is important to keep the run of tourism going. The Australian visitor only represents a small part of the total inbound tourism visitation in Ypres nowadays. However, from the Australian perspective, their visits are not unimportant. Tourism Flanders is seeing the Australian market as an upcoming market. This means tourism planners should respond to this forecast. The travel motivations of the Australian visitor, the importance of having Australian visitors and future scenarios are important points which needs to be clarified in order to stimulate Ypres as a tourism destination.

Commemoration is often linked to a tragic event- to remember those who died. Halbwachs refers to commemoration as collective memory, which is 'a reconstruction of the past that adapts the image of ancient facts to the beliefs and spiritual needs of the present'. Every generation creates several social memories to create links with the past and give more sense to their own lives.

Every random day, hundreds of veterans, tourists and pilgrims are attending the Last Post ceremony which is being held under the Menin Gate memorial- a building established in 1927 by the British to honor their death. The interest after 90 years in this daily ceremony is incredible.

Australians recognize 25 April as an occasion of national remembrance. Anzac Day is a time when Australians reflect on the many different meanings of war. Nowadays ANZAC means a lot more than just the military terms. "The ANZAC spirit encompasses values that every Australian holds dear and aspires to emulate in their own life: courage, bravery, sacrifice, loyalty, selflessness and resilience what Australians call mate ship". This helps Australia to shape its history, one to be proud of even though it was created out of war. There appears to be a deep need on the part of many younger Australians for a shared sacred experience. A "moving" experience of what it means to be Australian.

After a period of disinterest in the First World War, the past thirty years have seen increased interest and visitation to the battlefields. In the first place the combination of war and tourism seems extraordinary. However, battlefield sites and its attractions are playing an important role within the tourism field nowadays. Most of the fallen were buried in the battlefield and not brought to their home countries. This brought visitation to the memorials and cemeteries by pilgrims and tourists.

In the direct post-war period until the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, the reasons for battlefield visitation were to lighten their pain and to commemorate the dead. During these times tourists were defined as those who had not come to commemorate or search for relatives and their activities were negatively perceived by some. They thought that commemoration was not possible with the presence of tourists. However, everyone “traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes” is defined as tourist.

Within Australia the commemoration of the First World War plays a big role. The history of Australia has started during the First World War. The nationalism got a boost during the battle of Passchendaele (Ypres) what led to the national character of Australia nowadays. The position and aftermath of the Australians during the Great War is a reason for tourism to the area nowadays.

Since last 10-15 years international travel is increasing. The Commonwealth countries that had send soldiers during the Great War were Canada, Australia and New Zealand. However, Australia is the most important commonwealth country with 7300 visitors to Ypres per year. 64% of Australians are visiting the West Front to learn about history and 49% is visiting for family bonds. Australian visitors are 45+ years old.

World War 1 does not only generate visitors to the West Front, but is also an important economical factor to the region. A total of 30% is part of the total touristic revenues in the West Front.

Mill & Morrison (2012) mention today's way of living is tomorrow's culture. However, for Ypres battlefield tourism will be the most important reason for visits. As it concerns commemoration visits, the character of the city should not be changed as it generates many

visitors nowadays. However, also another kind of tourism is attracted to Ypres: spiritual tourists.

Nowadays social media plays an important role in tourism branding. With 200 million users posting on Twitter and a billion signed up and active on Facebook every month. Travel is a personal experience but social engagement (online or in person) has a big impacts. Ypres is not actively using Social Media platforms at the moment.

The SWOT analysis shows Ypres is a city with aided awareness. Besides this, the diversity for tourists is limited. However, because of its location and history it is possible to organize different kinds of activities for different target groups. It is important to take into account the competitors in the direct neighborhood and the aging generations.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Context analysis

Ypres is called the city of peace¹ (Mayors of Peace 2020 Vision Campaign). This ancient town located in the south-west of the Belgium is officially called Ieper. However, the French name Ypres is used in English due to its role in the First World War when the country only used the French language.

Ypres was rural from origin but during the First World War this city became the center of battles between Germany and the Allied forces because of its strategic position. Ypres was the place where five battlefields took place during the war. Approximately half a million people past away in the trenches around and the victims included soldiers from all over the world such as British, Australians, Canadians, Indians, South Africans and New Zealanders.

At the end of the war, this city was totally ruined and in 1918 the last citizens were mandatory evacuated. From this moment on, Ypres was seen as a ghost town. After the war, Ypres became a destination for battlefield tourism, as the country's historical remembrance site.

Today, 35.000 inhabitants are living in Ypres that highlights the small scale of the city. In the last thirty years tourism to Ypres is increasing, attracting 370.000 visitors yearly and expecting to welcome up to 500.000 visitors during the 100-year remembrance between 2014 and 2018 (West Tour). Family members of different forces are visiting the site to imagine and share the sufferings but also many others are attracted to Ypres. It is a place where people from around the world come to learn about the history or to commemorate their forefathers.

The awareness in Australia is growing about the Western Front while the position of the Australian visitor in Ypres is not well understood. Out of the Commonwealth countries, Australia is the most active when it comes to commemoration.

¹ The city holds a close friendship with another town on which war had a deep impact: Hiroshima

A big group of people want to keep the story of the First World War alive and the development process in this area is important to keep the run of tourism going. The Australian visitor only represents a small part of the total inbound tourism visitation in Ypres nowadays. However, from the Australian perspective, their visits are not unimportant. Tourism Flanders is seeing the Australian market as an upcoming market. This means tourism planners should respond to this forecast. The travel motivations of the Australian visitor, the importance of having Australian visitors and future scenarios are important points which needs to be clarified in order to stimulate Ypres as a tourism destination.

1.2 Research objective

The objective of this research is:

“To gain insight in the future position of Australian tourism in the development of Ypres (Belgium) in order to provide recommendations for destination management.”

To realize this research objective descriptive research was necessary to answer the following research questions. The main research question:

“To what extent is Australian tourism in Ypres expected to change as from 2018 onward?”

Is followed by five sub questions:

- How does the current Australian tourism market in Ypres look like?
- What are the main motivations for Australians to visit the area?
- What is the relation between the battle and the attraction of Australian tourism?
- What is Ypres as destination without remembrance tourism?
- What can Ypres offer in the future for the Australian tourist?

1.3 Methodology

The research was carried out in different parts.

1) Secondary research

Desk research found place throughout the thesis writing. Each chapter begins with a literature review in which the most important existing information about the subject is summarized. This information is gathered through academic article. The most important keywords which were used for literature were:

commemoration, battlefield tourism and Australian tourism.

2) Primary research

➤ Interviews

Valuable primary information was found via interviews with experts. E-mail contact was sought with Caroline Winter. Mrs. Winter is an Australian senior lecturer in tourism who did research to the ways in which visitors commemorate those who have fought in war and particularly the First World War. She has conducted research in Australia, France and Belgium and is also interested in the Australian national identity. Her articles provided a lot of background information which was being used in this thesis to compare with the Australian tourist at the Western Front in Ypres. She forwarded some of her research papers which provided great stimulus to think critically on the subject. In addition, these articles turned out to give valuable insight and depth to my thesis.

A phone interview was held with Peter Slosse, head of the Tourism Ypres office. He provided interesting and new information about the developments of Ypres, the current Australian market and future perspectives. He also gave me insight into the ownership within Ypres and cooperation of organizations. In our conversation he offered his help and he had sent me some useful document via e-mail. These documents included visitor market researches.

➤ Field research in Ypres

- **Observations**

A trip to Ypres was undertaken to get the feeling of the place. During field research, the observation of groups of visiting tourists, atmosphere and environment was undertaken. Most of the facts about remembrance tourism could already be found on the internet. While Visiting Ypres provided a much more profound feeling of the city and the surrounding area many interesting details for the thesis were being found.

- **Commemoration objects analysis**

In Ypres, the remembrance of the individual is very important. The analysis of commemoration objects and artifacts are important sources of information.

Many visitors bring these objects and artifacts to the commemoration places. The most striking objects were being photographed and analyzed to give an insight into the feeling and visitor motivations to Ypres.

➤ Blog analysis

These analyses are giving the thesis a deeper meaning as personal, primary information of the Australian tourist is being analyzed. Online blogs are very important sources because they provided comments of Australian visitors to Ypres. As many travellers are coming together and post their input online, this is was a great way of articulating the emotions of the Australian visitors. Quotes, thoughts and information was gathered and processed in this thesis. The website of the Australian government was the main source because here could be found the most extended information share about battlefield travellers.

➤ Review websites and social media

Websites such as Trip advisor were used to gather information which is important to understand the Australian market and to discover possible future improvements. Keywords were certain memorial places in Ypres and comments of the Australian visitor were read. 6 reviews were selected.

In the end, all information was been bound together and relations were sought to get well-found answers on the research questions which are explained in the conclusion and recommendations.

2. Commemoration

“Commemoration can be understood as an attempt at initiating societal engagement with national history at a time when such attachments to the past are fading” (cf. Halbwachs, 1950)

2.1 Personal and collective commemoration

Commemoration is often linked to a tragic event- to remember those who died. These tragedies may have a duration of one moment (the heave down of the Malaysian Airlines MH017 airplane or the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York) or for many years in case of war. Halbwachs refers to commemoration as collective memory, which is ‘a reconstruction of the past that adapts the image of ancient facts to the beliefs and spiritual needs of the present’ (1941).

Every generation creates several social memories to create links with the past and give more sense to their own lives. Collective commemoration often find place on the exact location of the tragedy, as many come together to honor the ones who died. In these cases, as soon as the political situation is declared safe and remembrance sites are being equipped, the visitors exists of as well tourists as pilgrims. Therefore, collective remembrance is seen as a public recollection to gather pieces of the past and joining them together in public. What they create is not only a cluster of individual memories; the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. When people come together to remember, they enter a domain beyond that of individual memory (Jay Winter & Emmanuel Sivan, 1999).

Personal remembrance occurs in case of a personal connection with a victim. These people want to mourn their beloved ones and this commemoration finds place at any time, moment and place. One specific way of personal remembrance is to write an autobiography of a victim which is being published and shared with others. This literature is used to understand the past and gives sense to the pieces for collective commemoration. Personal and collective

commemoration can also find place at the same time, for example when a ceremony is held. This makes those moments very emotional and understanding and respect of the audience is of great importance.

After the First World War of 1914-1918 the post-war generation created social memories which served to honor and remember the dead, and provide justification for the war and mass death (Howard 2002, Lloyd 1998, Mosse 1990, Winter 2006). Thousands of memorials were created across the world in small villages, cities and on the battlefields itself (Fussell 1977, Inglis 2005, Vance 1997).

What does commemoration actually mean for Australians? Commemoration plays an exceptional big role within Australia. The men who fought during the First World War nowadays are seen as true heroes and their bodies are buried in Flanders. During and after the war, the bodies of the victims could not be brought back home. The pain Australians got because the survivors were living very far from their beloved ones is indescribable. This important factor connects Australians with commemorating and the First World War.

Charles Bean came with the idea to establish the Australian War Memorial in Canberra in order to help Australians at home to understand the wartime experience. Nowadays, the memorial commemorates the sacrifice of many Australians who have died in war through commemorative ceremonies. Each year on Anzac Day (25 April) and Remembrance Day (11 November), the two major days of commemoration in Australia, the Memorial holds these National Ceremonies. Thousands of visitors are attending followed by the wreath laying at the Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier.



Menin Gate Memorial- The Last Post Ceremony

Remembrances find place every year on the same day, or a certain day is chosen for collective commemoration. Nowadays it is difficult to imagine how war times felt. However, the Last Post ceremony in Ypres is giving this feeling to every visitor attending the 30-minute ceremony. Every day at 8 P.M. the Last Post Ceremony finds place in order to commemorate the fallen during the First World War in that area. Every day hundreds of veterans, tourists and pilgrims are attending the ceremony which is being held under the Menin Gate memorial- a building established in 1927 by the British to honor their death.

The interest in the First World War after 100 years in this daily ceremony is incredible. This shows collective commemoration is not only important for Australians. Around the Menin Gate Memorial people are chattering- most of the time in English. Many are travelling to Ypres to share experiences and to commemorate.

2.2 ANZAC

2.2.1 Early commemorations

The military tradition of ANZAC is very important within Australia. ANZAC stands for Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. When the First World War started, Australia had been a federal commonwealth for only 13 years. The national government wanted to establish its reputation among the nations in the world.

In 1915 thousands of young Australian and New Zealand soldiers decided to work together in forming a part of allied expedition that set out to capture the Gallipoli peninsula in order to open the Dardanelles to the allied navies. The most important action was to capture Istanbul in Turkey. This was the moment the ANZAC tradition was formed. Australians had fought in wars before but this was the first time representatives from all the country, from every province were standing together. This tradition is still fostered and it creates a strong bond between New Zealand and Australia, especially in times of crisis. (Australian Government Department of Veteran's Affairs, 2011)

It was not as easy as it seemed because the Turkish army was a strong competitor. The Australian and New Zealand forces landed on Gallipoli on 25 April and the campaign took eight months in total. At the end of 1915 the allied forces were evacuated and over the

duration over the war 60,000 Australians had died in Europe. As Australia was an emerging country with a population of less than five million habitants, losing a significant part of the youth caused a traumatic experience for the people in their home country.

Stories of the sacrifice, leadership and mate ship which happened in Gallipoli had made a big impact on Australians at home, and this date became the day on which Australians remember the sacrifice of those who had died in as well the First as Second World War. The Gallipoli campaign failed in military objectives but the Australian and New Zealand actions during this period left a powerful legacy. The creation of ANZAC was formed and became an important part of the identity of both nations. ANZAC Day was first commemorated at the Memorial in 1942. It was held very small because the government order was to prohibit large public in case of a Japanese air attack. Since then, ANZAC Day has been commemorated at the Memorial every year.

Australians recognize 25 April as an occasion of national remembrance, which takes two forms. Commemorative services are held at dawn – the time of the original landing – across the nation. Later in the day, ex-servicemen and women meet to take part in marches through the major cities and in many smaller centers. Commemorative ceremonies are more formal and are held at war memorials around the country. In these ways, Anzac Day is a time when Australians reflect on the many different meanings of war.

2.2.2 The national character

5 QUESTIONS to Men who have NOT Enlisted !!!

1. IF You are Physically Fit and between 18 and 44 years of age, are you really satisfied with what you are doing to-day ?

2. DO You feel quite happy as you walk along the streets and see OTHER Men wearing the King's Uniform ?

3. WHAT will you say in years to come when people ask you "Where did YOU serve in the Great War?" ?

4. WHAT will you answer when your children grow up and say "Father! Why weren't you a soldier, too?" ?

5. WHAT would happen to the Empire if every man stayed at home ?

Your King and Country Need You!
ENLIST TO-DAY!

This poster published by the Queensland government during the First World War is one of the many propaganda flyers. All men were stimulated to go to Europe and fight as a team. It tries to motivate men playing on the feeling of fear. However, these flyers were not giving a realistic idea of what was really going on in the war. Many soldiers were not prepared of what was going to happen in the West Front.

Nowadays ANZAC means a lot more than just the military terms. "The ANZAC spirit encompasses values that every Australian holds dear and aspires to emulate in their own

life: courage, bravery, sacrifice, loyalty, selflessness and resilience what Australians call mate ship” (Australian Government Department of Veteran’s Affairs, 2011). This helps Australia to shape its history, one to be proud of even though it was created out of war. There appears to be a deep need on the part of many younger Australians for a shared sacred experience. A “moving” experience of what it means to be Australian.



**British Lard
Marketing Board**

Oswald-Thistle
Mgarr, Malta

posts: 134

5. Re: New Zealand battlefield tours around Ypres

01 March 2014, 22:49

I don't think you specifically need tours especially for Kiwis, on The Western Front the Anzacs, Canadians, British plus Belgian and French forces all fought and died side by side and are commemorated and buried together, therefore what you need is a guide with good generic knowledge of the Salient and it's many tours and by natural progression you will find yourselves in the footsteps of your brave countrymen but also from other nations and dominions, when you eventually get to see The Menen Port than you will see that there is no segregation in death it is the one common denominator that links ALL the fallen.

An Australian traveller posted his question on a blog, asking information about battlefield tours for Australians. Malta Mgarr (2014) who’s reaction is being published above, commented “you will see that there is no segregation in death it is the one common denominator that links ALL the fallen”. This outlines the meaning of “mate ship”. In times of war, this saying was the mainspring for all soldiers and they would have wanted to keep this attitude for future generations as well.

2.3 Battlefield tourism

“Despite the horrors of death and destruction, the memorabilia of warfare and allied products probably constitutes the largest single category of tourist attractions in the world”. (Smith, 1996)

After a period of disinterest in the First World War, the past thirty years have seen increased interest and visitation to the battlefields (Winter, 2011). In the first place the combination of war and tourism seems extraordinary. However, battlefield sites and its attractions are

playing an important role within the tourism field nowadays. Most of the fallen were buried in the battlefield and not brought to their home countries. This brought visitation to the memorials and cemeteries by pilgrims and tourists (Lloyd 1998, Walter 1993).

2.3.1 The growth of interest

Many battlefields were almost forgotten until recent years, when activities of small groups of people brought it into the attention. The discovery of a mass grave of Australian and British soldiers in the North of France has been widely reported in the media and as a result many people have begun to visit the village of Fromelles and the cemeteries. The situation of a small village without large-scale visitor facilities which experience sudden increases in tourism is common in the tourism literature. The visitors to Fromelles are mainly committed, older, and retired Australian and British tourists who were visiting the village (Winter, 2014).

Caroline Winter explained via personal e-mail contact many Australians visit Fromelles on their way between Ypres and the Somme. In Ypres, visitation already started years ago. However, international tourism is increasing since last 10-15 years as result of the developing air industry (Tourism Ieper).

It is not easy to deal with the war at a distance and it is quite recent that so many Australians have been able to go to Europe to the battlefields. Many make one trip in which they have to see as much as they can in that time. They stay about two days in Ieper and maybe the Somme, so their time is short.

2.3.2 Tourist or pilgrim?

Motivations for the increasing tourism visits can not only be found into seeking identity, but also the increase of dark tourism (Sharpley, 2009). This might make it difficult to distinguish the different tourists who are visiting the site. Winter (2010) reports most of the visitors are tourists, and a small part are pilgrims. These pilgrims are the visitors who are family members or ex-servicemen who were visiting the sites for commemoration purposes (Lloyd, 1998). The later travels of citizens from the younger countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, whose nation defining stories were formed during the war, were also framed within the term pilgrimage (Walter, 1993; Inglis, 2005; Scates, 2006).

Although in the Middle Ages the defeat was more important than the area itself, often churches were built around battlefield sites (Hallam, 1985). The first evidence of people

visiting battlefields comes from the battle of Waterloo in 1815, which became a popular tourism destination in the nineteenth century (Seaton 1999). This means that before the First World War tourist visitation to battlefields was accepted and it was assumed this situation would be the same after the war.

However, the tragic battles in the First World War and the big numbers of dead changed the way of war remembrance and battlefield visitation. In the direct post-war period until the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, the reasons for battlefield visitation were to lighten their pain and to commemorate the dead (Lloyd, 1998). During these times tourists were defined as those who had not come to commemorate or search for relatives and their activities were negatively perceived by some. They thought that commemoration was not possible with the presence of tourists (Lloyd, 1998; Mosse, 1990).

How can a tourist actually be defined? This is a very important and even sensible question when it concerns war visitation. The main distinction which should be made is between family members and visitors without personal connections with the battlefield. Tourists are described by the WTO as people “traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes” (UNWTO, 1995). In battlefield visitation it is difficult whether to call a visitor a tourist or not, as all visitors would be tourists. Those who travel in order to find information or to feel connected to ancestors and ancestral roots are categorized as legacy tourists by McCain and Ray (2003). They define this group as a sub-segment of the heritage market that consists of tourists who have a personal connection with their heritage, what distinct them from the random tourist.

Both tourists and pilgrims assumed that at particular places and moments it was possible to renew, recreate or capture something of the war and the experiences which defined it.

2.3.3 Remembering the individual

Never before had governments demanded such sacrifice from their peoples as during the First World War. Never before had so much people from all social backgrounds given up their lives for the state. The Nation promised to honor their name. Among the British, all who had died in the service of king and country were remembered individually and on the same basis. In the certainty of equality in death the British fallen could not be brought to their home country.

Other countries took different views.

Cemeteries and official monuments claimed the many dead had not died without reason, but for glorious ideals such as freedom, democracy,

king and country. Classical styles were chosen on purpose, the most glorious and timeless architecture.

Ypres is the city of remembrance. More than half a million of the nearly 10 million combatants dead or reported missing were lost in and around Ypres. For them the war was finally over- reported the Flanders Fields museum. The survivors would have to live with the horrors for the rest of their lives- those with physical or mental scars, those who had lost friends and family, and the many unemployed old soldiers. Sorrow and loss was expressed in stone memorials or framed photographs. Objects brought back from the battlefields were full of emotional memories. Even today, souvenirs soldiers once brought home from the ruins are now returned by the new generations.

A visit to Ypres will make clear the commemoration of the First World War is focused on every individual who have fought in the war- no matter which country of origin. Several places which are visited by tourists emphasize this thought. The Menin Gate memorial is one of the most famous remembrance places in Ypres and has listed the names of all soldiers who had fought for the British Empire, including Australians as Andrew Fisher, labor prime

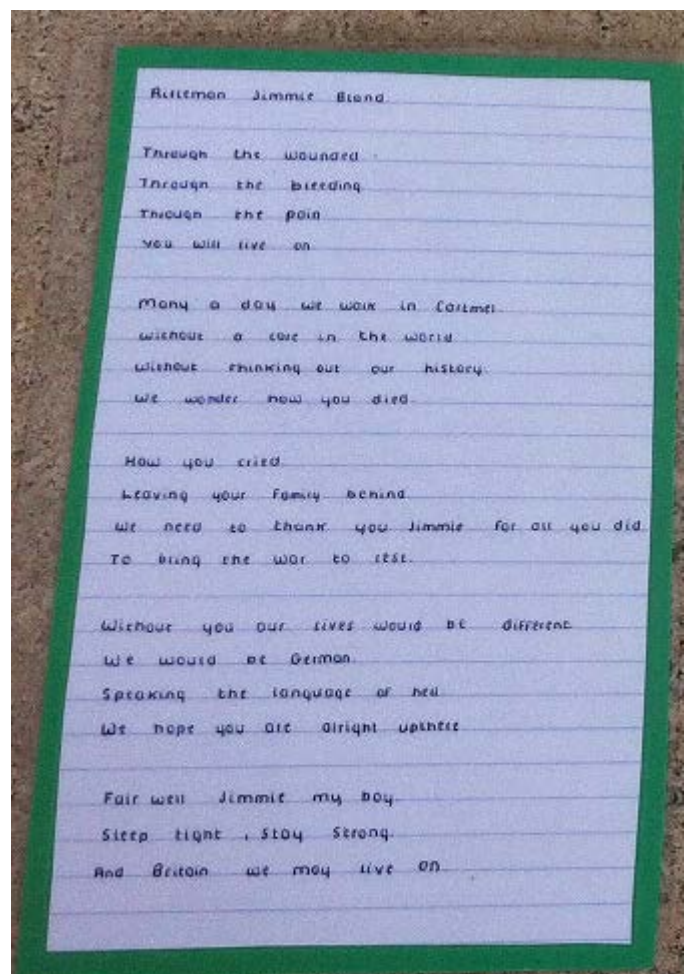


minister during 1914 to 1916, declared that Australia would support Britain to ‘the last man and the last shilling’ (BBC, 2011). The Menin Gate memorial lists the names of almost 54.900 British soldiers who had died or were missing during the war. The Menin Gate memorial turned out to be too small and the Tyne Cot cemetery, located a couple kilometers southwards of the city center, is listing the remaining names of those who were missing after August 1917.

The Flanders Field museum on its turn has developed technology to interactive museum visits. In an open space which looks like a little cinema, a 3D movie shows actors who play the role of persons who have lived in the war. These personal stories are being told from different perspectives. Not only soldiers tell about their feelings but also nurses and family members. By using the bracelet which each visitor gets by entering the museum, every visitor can “check in” at Wi-Fi spots and listen to personal stories of people on their way through the museum.

Technology increased rapidly in the last 100 years and this becomes also clear while watching and reading words on graves in Ypres. Those who are not identified have got the text “Known unto God”² or “A Soldier of the Great War”³ written on their grave. While visiting Ypres, the attention is also drawn to remember those soldiers.

Visitors are bringing self-made little artifacts to the graves, sometimes brought to a person in particular but also many to these anonymous graves, meant for all fallen soldiers. It is not always clear for whom the piece is meant, but it is assumable that pieces put down on the grave of a specific person are meant for them.



² Figure 1- New Zealand Monument

³ Figure 2- “A soldier of the great war”

The artifacts consist of poems, pieces of art with inspirational texts, photos, flowers and little wooden crosses. As visiting Ypres is part of several schools in France and Belgium, it could be possible students are asked to bring a piece to commemorate as well. However, it seems like most of the pieces are brought by those who want to share their feelings as the texts are very deep and touching.

The poem on the right has been exposed on the bottom of an anonymous graph at the Ramparts Lille cemetery in Ypres: a quiet, natural rest place at the outer ring of the city. The author of this text, Lewis, tries to express the feeling of the young service men. It suggests they are going abroad for the first time without an idea of what was going on in the war area. 100 years ago the communication was not as developed as it is now, so this could be right. From excitement to scare is the main feeling the reader gets when trying to understand the viewpoint of a soldier in war times.

Perhaps others strengthen this thought by adding the cruise with flower at the same grave as well. As the poem is written in English, it has probably been written by a British visitor who came to visit Ypres as a tourist.

At the entrance of the Ramparts cemetery can be found a book in which visitors are able to write their name, country of origin and thoughts. This book shows there are buried 153 English, 11 Australian, 14 New Zealand and 10 Canadian soldiers here. Indian and South African soldiers are honored as well, but some of their graves can be found on the big and impressive Tyne Cot cemetery.⁴



⁴ Figure 3- Ramparts cemetery

Remembrance poppies

One flower in particular is being found everywhere in Ypres, the so called “poppies”. It is the symbol of remembrance in Ypres. A poppy (“klaproos” in Dutch) only grows when other plants around do not anymore. Most poppies are being found on ruined places. The ground around the trenches in the First World War was damaged and many poppies shown up. This means this was the only flower which could be seen during war.

Another meaning of the poppy is those of the pain of the soldiers. Some poppies are used to make morphine, which was used to suppress the pain of the wounded soldiers. “We shall not sleep, though poppies grow” is the thought which came from war (In Flanders Fields).

The red leaves are a symbol for the blood of those who had fallen and the middle is black, the color of mourning. In the heart of the flower can be seen a cross, the Christian symbol. The red flower is being carried by visitors as brooch, is being glued after names of beloved ones and can also be found on many graves. One thing in clear: the artifacts all show the respect for those who have died by commemorating them. The person who made the poppy famous is McCrae, he wrote a poem during the war in which he must have seen hundreds of poppies. In order to share the feeling his poem is cited below:



The poppy as symbol of remembrance

*“In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

McCrae

2.4 Battlefields and visitation

Some of the First World War battlefields have attracted large numbers of visitors while other sites did not (Winter, 2014). This chapter compares other battlefields with Ypres.

2.4.1 Gallipoli

It seems that Gallipoli has been a well-known destination for many Australian. This is striking because Gallipoli is a minor, failed campaign which cost less than a sixth of the Australian deaths on the Western Front. Dr Peter Stanley (2006) reports this event “fulfills the needs felt by many Australians to connect with or express their national identity. It says as much about what Australians today feel about themselves as it related to the events of the campaign. Gallipoli has become a symbol of Australia’s national identity, achievement and existence.” This would mean the importance of Gallipoli would have not so much to do with personal remembrance, but with collective memory which give sense to the lives of Australians nowadays and the character of the country. A distinction between remembrance and battlefield tourism can be made (ABC net Australia).

2.4.2 Hiroshima

Ypres these days has the title of "city of peace". As mentioned in the context analysis, Ypres holds a strong bond with Hiroshima. Both towns witnessed warfare at its worst: Ypres was one of the first places where chemical weapons were used while in Hiroshima atomic bombings were used. The city governments of Ypres and Hiroshima agreed that cities should never be targets again and campaign for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Both cities are part of the international campaign called “mayors of peace”: an international Mayoral organization mobilizing cities and citizens worldwide to eliminate nuclear weapons by the year 2020.

Commemorations in Hiroshima and Ypres are being held in a similar way. Every day on the 6th of August finds place remembrance ceremony for those who died. Museums and memorials have been created in the natural scenery in the city. A difference between the cities is that Hiroshima’s Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall now it listed as UNESCO World Heritage Site. This building was not completely destroyed because of the blast of the atomic bomb.

3. The Australian market

Within Australia the commemoration of the First World War plays a big role. The history of Australia has started during the First World War. The nationalism got a boost during the battle of Passchendaele (Ypres) what led to the national character of Australia nowadays.

Australians were fighting in the battles already at the end of August and October 1916, but their contribution in June 1917 in the third battle of Ypres was more important. It was a successful battle, while Australia counted 38.000 dead and wounded. They did not have enough soldiers and in total 60.000 Australians died during the First World War, including 12.750 in Belgium (Tourism Flanders).

The position and aftermath of the Australians during the Great War is a reason for tourism to the area nowadays. Therefore, the research questions to be answered in this chapter are the following:

- How does the current Australian tourism market in Ypres look like?
- What are the main motivations for Australians to visit the area?
- What is the relation between the battle and the attraction of Australian tourism?

In order to answer these questions, the profile of the Australian inbound tourists in Flanders is being described. As the First World War is already 100 years ago, it is interesting to explain the travel motivations of the Australian tourist nowadays.

The sub-chapter visitation and battlefields is giving an insight into the relation between the battle and the attraction of Australian tourists. To give this insight, different battlefields and tourism visitation is compared.

In the future perspective, all market information gathered is being used to give a future prediction of the Australian tourist to the area of Ypres, from 2018 onward.

3.1 Profile

Tourism plays an important role for the economy in the region of Flanders. Flanders is the name for the Dutch spoken area which covers the north and western front of Belgium. In the market details, the Australian market is outlined compared to the total tourism to Flanders and the West Front.

Year	2013
WO1 visitors West Front	319.000 (750.000 to expect in 2014)
Australian visitors to West Front and Ypres	7.300 (10.000 +35% in 2014)
Month	May, July
Stay	2 nights 97% in South Flanders, 89% in Ypres
Accommodation	Hotel 75% B&B 18% Camping 7%
Age	Average 54 year 53% 45+ 21% 65+ (39% retired)
Company	2 persons
Wealth	52% high income

3.1.1 Volume and behavior

Since last 10-15 years international travel is increasing (phone interview Peter Slosse, Tourism Ypres). It became easier for the Australian tourist to travel overseas. The main reason is the de-regulation within the airline industry in Australia what leads to more competition and greater pricing freedom.

Visitation to Flanders and Ypres

The total number foreign visitation to Flanders is about 6.500.000 visitors per year including 45.555 Australians. Most of Australians are visiting Flanders because of its art cities (85%), these cities are in top 3: Brussels, Bruges and Antwerp.

Besides this, the countryside visits also plays an important part with its 14.000 visits (15%). West-Flanders, the province wherein Ypres is located is one of the four regions included in the countryside. Out of those, over 50% of all tourists are visiting West front.⁵ Peter Slosse (Tourism Ypres) mentioned in a phone interview of November 2014, we could assume these entire 7300 Australian West front visitors, are visiting Ypres. Australians make a long travel and Ypres it is the most well-known destination in the region. Figure 5 in the appendix confirms this comment.⁶

56% of the visits to the West Front are from foreign countries. Most visits to this area are derived from surrounding countries such as the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany and France by non-first generation travellers. 0.7% is the percentage the Australian tourists are representing in the total inbound tourism in Flanders.

The Commonwealth countries that had send soldiers during the Great War were Canada, Australia and New Zealand. However, Australia is the most important commonwealth country with 7300 visitors to Ypres per year. The reason for this importance within Australia is the formation of their nation during the First World War. This means nowadays Australia is ranked as 19th visiting country in the world. Tourism Flanders mentioned Australia as “future market”. Most of the Australian World War 1 visitors are living in the provinces New South Wales (36%), Queensland (23%) and Victoria (19%), (West tour).

The commemoration years

The 10 most visited sites in Flanders have done researches to their visitor numbers. They conclude since 2006, tourism in Flanders is increasing.⁷ The total amount of visitation derived from all the Commonwealth countries has increased with 45%. According to Tourism Flanders, this has to do with the commemoration years 2014-2018 which should be the most busy visitation years in the history of the area. An analysis is made by West tour which

⁵ Figure 4- The Australian Market In Flanders

⁶ Figure 5- Importance Australia

⁷ Figure 6- Increasing WW1 tourism in West-Flanders

provides the first tourism numbers from January till September 2014. Before these years, yearly 370.000 tourists are visiting the area of the West Front. During the commemoration years, the expectation was to welcome up to 500.000 visitors.

However, tourism numbers are increasing so fast in 2014 that they expect 700.000 visitors this year, with a repeat visitation of 3 times. The Australian market has already increased to 10.000 visitors, what means an increase of 35%.⁸ According to Peter Slosse, it is expected the inbound tourism numbers of the Australian will strongly increase in 2017, as 1917 was the year the Australian infantry had fought within Flanders. Mr. Slosse also commented tourism numbers may decrease after 2018, but the market will not totally dent.

Composition

Most Australian visitors are individual travellers: 54% of the total inbound tourists to Flanders are travelling with 2 persons and 28% is travelling with 3, 4 or 5 persons. Australians are most of the time travelling with their partner and secondly with a group of friends or adult family members. Only 6% is bringing children to the area (Tourism Flanders).

Length of stay

The overnight stay is approximately 100.000 per year what means the Australian visitor stays around 2 nights per visit in Ypres (39,9% 1 night, 29,5% 3 nights). This is the same number of nights as visitors from other countries (Tourism Flanders, 2013).⁹

Travel period

The European summer months and especially July is the peak season for Australian individual tourists. This is in their winter period. 81% is visiting the area of Flanders for the first time, while 19% is repeating or visiting a World War 1 site again.

Accommodation

The Australian visitor prefers to stay in a hotel (74,8%) rather than a B&B (17,9%). However, a campsite is attracting as well and takes the third place of type of accommodation with 7,3%. On average 66,5% of the hotels in West Front are occupied per year, with almost 90% in the European summer season months.

⁸ Figure 7- Increase Australian Tourism

⁹ Figure 8- Overnights

3.2 Travel motivations

Twenty years ago, it was not easy to undertake a travel far away. Lately, since 10-15 years it all became a lot easier for the international travellers with improved air transport and lower prices.

For Australians, the difference between the Belgium and French front is not always clear. They do not spend much time in the West Front (on average 2 nights). However, their journey is more expensive. Most Australians are visiting the World War 1 sites as part of their journey through Western Europe. 55% of Australians are visiting sites in the North of France as well. Visitors from other European countries are making fewer round trips (Tourism Flanders).

Australians are particularly interested into two sites which are known as the “Australian Remembrance Trail” along the Western front in France and Belgium. This trail honors the service of Australians in the area in where 48,000 were killed. It links the most important sites in Australia’s national narrative. (Travel Weekly Australia, 2013)

The purpose of travelling varies: 69% visits the Belgian cities for leisure, 21% for conferences and 10% for other reasons. Battlefield tourism is falling under leisure and other reasons.

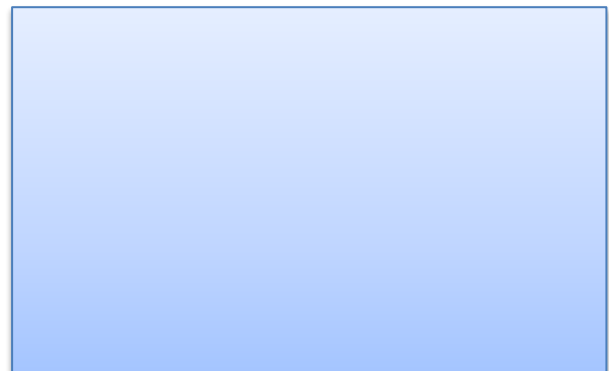
Nowadays 90% of the inbound tourists in Ypres are battlefield tourists. According to Peter Slosse of Tourism Ypres, previously, 2/3 of all visitors were interested in battlefield tourism and 1/3 was visiting Ypres for history and environment. Within the Australian market this is a bit different: “64% of Australians are visiting the West Front to learn about history and 49% is visiting for family bonds.”

3.2.1 Family bonds

Australia was part of the British Empire during the First World War and this is why their soldiers are officially remembered and honored in the Menin Gate Memorial as



Reasons for visiting explained in a personal message



well. However, for them it meant more than just being an extra force in order to defend the Germans. Despite commemoration is important for every nation and individual, it especially is for Australians. Their nation is formed during the First World War.

An important travel motivation for Australians is to honor their death and commemorate the individual. The Australian tourists are writing their personal stories on blog websites of the Australian Government and Trip advisor. It became clear Australians visiting the area are particularly interested in the graves of their great grand family. 5 blogs are identified to understand the travel motivations of the Australian tourist in Ypres, Belgium.

3.2.2. Blog analysis

Andrew Gibson (2008) reported in a blog on the website of the Australian Government he was the first of his family in Australia who visited the area of West-Flanders. For him, it was important to gather as much information as possible and tell the stories back home.

andrew gibson

Sun 13 Apr 2008

what a great tribute to our fallen you have compiled! well done fella. i'm off to europe in 2 weeks and will visit the battle fields of the western front. my great grandfather was killed on the 27th sept, 1917 in the battle of polygon wood. his name was [percival james lyford 7277](#) he was a private. i'll be the first family member to visit the area and am trying to gather as much info as possible. all the best andrew j gibson

The website set up by the Australian Government, attracts a lot of attention. Many want to share their story and are trying to find information about their family members. The website visitors are giving specific names and it is surprising how much most of them already know about the person they are looking for. It seems the Australian tourist is doing a lot of desk research before visiting the area, as so does Jeffery Barr (2008). Every little detail is important for him and he seems proud to be able to show around his family in Ypres.

Jeffery Barr

Fri 25 Apr 2008

Hi Craig,

I am also related to a casualty of this battle, his name was 337 [Sergeant Hugh Barr](#), MM, 44th Battalion AIF. He was killed in action on the 13th of October, 1917. The AWM and National Archives sites have been a great resource and I have been able to obtain copies of photographs, service records, Battalion diaries and personal letters but like the previous responder I have been unsuccessful in locating a copy of the MM citation. Using the Battalion diaries and a foot note on pge 851 Chapter XX (Broodseinde) I have identified an action that took place on the 4th of October, 1917 which involved him and others taking two pillboxes and machine guns on the "red line" which was located near the railway line just north of Zonnebeke & Broodseinde. I have a map that marks the location of these pillboxes known as Thames. In July my family and I will walk the ground when we visit Ypres and surrounding areas.

Regards,

Jeffery Barr

Jeffery Barr

Craig,

Yes I am aware of the war diaries and have searched them looking for any related information. I have found a few entries which actually name my great, great uncle but nothing about the MM. He is named a few times as a member of patrols into no mans land, the first mention he has the rank of private.

Some of the material that I have obtained from the AWM collection contains personal letters sent from the front to his mother in Ireland as well as letters of condolence, particularly one dated the 13.10.17 from Captain Roy Skinner, Company Commander, 44th Battalion. I can see how that letter would have given some comfort to the family back in Ireland.

I do have a copy of a document "Graves Registration Unit (Exhumation)" which lists the cemetery as Tyne Cot. This document was one of several in the National Archives. Can you tell me if this document refers to a battle field exhumation and transfer to Tyne Cot or does it relate to an exhumation from Tyne Cot. Geographically, Tyne Cot is located close to where he fell on the 13th of October, 1917 as a direct result of shelling. This cemetery will be visited during our trip and I would like to know if he is buried there.

I will be visiting the AWM next week end with my family and we will be paying extra attention to exhibits that relate to this part of the war.

Many Thanks,

Jeffery Barr

Editor's response: Hi Jeffery, he's on the Menin Gate Memorial which lists those who died (or were missing presumed dead), and have no known grave. I'd have to have a look at the Graves Registration Unit document. I'll contact you offline about this and the Military Medal. Regards, Craig.

As described by Frank Ockwell (2013) Australians are not well informed about the exact location and graves of their family members. This is a very painful experience and they seem keen to find out in a field research where their beloved ones are finding their last rest.

The three blog posts beneath were written by Australians visitors who visited Ypres. They were both visiting the area because a far family member has fought in the war. The attractions they are particularly interested in have to do with the Commonwealth remembrances.



Stocky54
Wollongong...

posts: 1
reviews: 10

3. Re: New Zealand battlefield tours around Ypres

01 March 2014, 12:42

I am an Australian and my partner and I visited Ypres to find my Great Uncles grave and visit the places he fought and fell. To get the most out of a day in this area I suggest hiring a private guide - that way you can sit back and be taken to the places YOU want to see. I found that many of the tours from Ypres didn't go to the places I wanted to see or I had to do two tours to see it all.


In a day we visited a many number of sites, incl. Tyne Cot, [Hill 60](#), [Hooge Crater Museum](#), Passchendaele and the NZ memorial.

I can thoroughly recommend www.trenchmaptours.com - Iain McHenry is his name - an author, historian and a great tour guide. Picked us up from our hotel, drove us around and gave us a real insight into the battles and what happened. He can tailor the trip to follow the New Zealanders and am sure you will find it very very insightful.

Great Blog Craig. My Great uncle Private A.H.Ockwell 4484 24th Battalion 11th reinforcement was KIA 09-10-1917 and buried in the field at a place known as Daisy Wood (and a wooden cross erected). In correspondence, the Battalion sign writer says the men killed during September, October and November were buried on the YPRES front near polygon Wood. I understand men buried where they fell were later collected and located to various cemeteries in the area? and this was carried out for years after the wars end. I'm hoping to visit this area later in the year and am interested in knowing if there is some record or other that might give an indication about what war cemetery my Great Uncle would have been transported too (noting he has no known grave listed). The war diaries seem to be no help and his Red Cross Record only has the witness accounts with some mentioning he was buried in the field at a place known as Daisy Wood, another says near Polygon Wood, another says at Brodeinside Ridge ? Given yours and your readers wealth of knowledge, what places should I be visiting to at least feel I've walked somewhere near his last actions and resting place. Many thanks, Frank



thmoore
sydney

 Destination Expert
for Cambodia

posts: 12,695
reviews: 75

9. Re: New Zealand battlefield tours around Ypres

05 May 2014, 22:40

Denise ... we were in Ieper in Jan 2013 .. following the Australian 39th (my husband's gt uncle) and the Otago Regiment (my grandmother's brother - KIA at Polderhoek Chateau near Passchendaele)

you may get some info from trip report tripadvisor.com.au/ShowTopic-g188675-i2668-k...

helen

Edited: 05 May 2014, 22:41

4. Ypres as tourist destination

Ypres originally was a rural area with an important location for trade, close to the river and highway. In the middle ages the city developed its facilities and expended its neighborhoods. During the war of 1914-1918, the city was totally ruined because of its five battles. British voted to leave Ypres as a ruin as remembrance but the city was rebuild in its original state. Germany was forced to fund this and the reconstruction lasts more than forty years. Nowadays Ypres is the center of remembrance with more than 170 cemeteries and many monuments around. Tourism plays an important role as both pilgrims and tourists come to visit this impressive place. However, how would Ypres look like without these visitations?

4.1 Economic impacts

World War 1 does not only generate visitors to the West Front, but is also an important economical factor to the region. A total of 30% is part of the total touristic revenues in the West Front. The total revenues of First World War tourism in the West Front is estimated 34.5 million Euro in 2008. As World War 1 tourism is increasing, also the finances do: a growth of 10.6% compared to 2006. The biggest spenders are the overnight visitors with 75 Euro per person per night. Day visitors are spending 25 Euro per person.

Purpose	Amount per year (2008)
Total tourism West Front	34.5 million
Accommodation	14.3 million (45.8%)
Restaurants/cafes	6.2 million (20%)
Shopping	4.3 million (13.7%)
Attractions and events	3.0 million (9.5%)

4.2 The destination mix

After the rebuilding of Ypres, the city also got the important task to be the place of remembrances. The destination mix will outline the current situation and activities in Ypres. The map at the end of this chapter will give an insight into the scope and relative distance between the attractions.

1) Attractions: war and religion

Ypres is attracting tourists for both war and religious attractions. Government owns the landscape around Ypres. Both private and non-profit organizations are located in the city center of Ypres. Ypres has got site attractions, what means they cannot be moved and are having a long duration. The main attractions are museums, churches/memorial places and cemeteries.

The Flanders Field museum, located in the city center, is the most famous museum in Ypres since its reconstructions in 1998 with more than 200.000 visitors per year. The Australian government recently funded the Passchendaele museum which is also well-known but located in Zonnebeke, a village close to Ypres. Both museums are private organizations, they ask entry prices and have a souvenir store and café. Short-run profit maximization may be detrimental to the long-term success of the destination.

Ypres counts many churches. The biggest and most beautiful church is the St. Martins cathedral, located at the back of the In Flanders Fields museum. Notable is this church is not mentioned in Google maps. In Ypres, many little churches are located as well what indicated the traditional buildings or religious population. The churches are non-profit organizations, no entry fees are required. However, the church contains a store and money is asked to take a seat. The price for a seat might be low, 20 cents, but is definitely not common when visiting a church elsewhere. This could indicate the economic crisis in the churches or the commercial character of Ypres. As well the Menin Gate memorial and cemeteries are free from charge. These preserve attractions can mean great things for tourism and may back out if the ventures because too commercialized.

Attractions are the main reason for international tourists to visit Ypres. The human imprint is big as Ypres was totally rebuilt after the war. In the city center, natural environment can only be found around the cemeteries while the Ramparts Lille cemetery includes a park which is

located at the south of the city center. Outside the city center, in the east part of Ypres five bigger bushes are located. The Tourism System (Mill and Morrison, 2012) mentions a varied landscape may draw more visitors than a single great feature. In 2006 a research outlined the repeat visitation to the sites in Ypres. Every tourist, visit 2.8 times on average an attraction.

During 2014-2018, every week different events are being held, all in the theme of commemorations. This involves cultural activities such as dance, lectures and concerts. (Tourism Ieper) The yearly Christmas market in Ypres is an initiative to attract tourists in the winter period as well. Especially local and regional people are visiting this market. These visitors are interesting for tourism planners as they are repeating their visits to Ypres.

The Last-Post Ceremony

The Last-Post is a ceremony which is taking place since 1928, to memorize fallen soldiers of the British Empire in the defense during the First World War. Every evening at 8 p.m. since 1928, traffic has been halted and the Last-Post is held under the Arch of the Menin Gate Memorial. This tradition is a defining experience for every pilgrim, as well local as tourist, to the Western Front. The names of the nearly 55.000 missing soldiers are engraved on the panels of this memorial. Visitation differs per season and a fund from local habitants and the British Commonwealth was raised to cover the expenses (Worldwar1.com).

Religion

Besides the memory of the war, citizens of Belgium mention in online blogs there is much more to discover while visiting Ypres. The political and religious history can be found in the St-Martins Cathedral in the center of Ypres. Weapon shields of the most important inhabitants are shown there. They speak about the rebuilding of its original city and the preserve of culture and traditions (Virtual tourist).

2) Facilities

In Ypres, facilities are there to support its attractions.

Hotels and B&B's

Fifteen hotels are located in Ypres and its 381 rooms have an occupation degree of more than 65 percent. However, Ypres also contains a lot of Bed & Breakfasts, 25 in total.

Restaurants, bars and cafes

The restaurants in Ypres serve international meals for the tourists but promote their traditional (grandmother's) food and its beer. All restaurants focus on different aspects- business, children and atmosphere such as luxurious or cozy.

Shopping

Ypres has a small city town center with some local stores. Tourism leper is located in the Flanders Fields museum.

Guided tours

Guided tours are a very important supporting facility as many international visitors main reason of visiting nowadays is to learn about or find specific information.

3) Infrastructure

As other Western European cities, Ypres contains an excellent infrastructure including a developed internet connection. Security is also part of infrastructure. However, during a visit in Ypres there cannot be found extra city security.

4) Transportation

Transportation increased a lot since last years. Especially transport per train has become more popular and governments invest a lot of money in high speed train connections. Ypres got a small, local train station on 10 minute walking distance to the city center. However, seen the distance Australians are only visiting per airplane.

5) Hospitality resources

Ypres is totally in the atmosphere of welcoming tourists. Employees around the several attractions have an hospitality attitude and are clearly trained to inform visitors.



4.2 Ypres without remembrance tourism

Today's way of life is tomorrow's culture (Mill & Morrison, 2012)

Nowadays, remembrance tourism plays an important role in Ypres. Does the statement of Mill & Morrison also apply on Ypres? This chapter gives an insight into the research question:

“What is Ypres as destination without remembrance tourism?”

This question is important because in order to be successful, a tourism destination needs to be competitive. According to Richie and Crouch¹⁰, this means that the destination

“Has the ability to increase tourism expenditures, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations”.

Is this the case in Ypres?

Most of the attractions, mentioned in the destination mix, in Ypres are attractive for battlefield tourists. Peter Slosse mentioned in past, 2/3 of the visitors came for the battlefields while 1/3 visited Ypres and the surrounding area for outdoor activities. Nowadays, 90% of all visitors are battlefield tourists. This means most of these tourists are attracted to Ypres because of its battlefields. Mill & Morrison (2012) mention today's way of living is tomorrow's culture. However, for Ypres battlefield tourism will be the most important reason for visits. As it concerns commemoration visits, the character of the city should not be changed as it generates many visitors nowadays. However, also another kind of tourism is attracted to Ypres: spiritual tourists.

4.2.1 Spiritual tourism

Newspaper “Trouw” published the article “Living in the middle of mysteries” on the 25th of October 2014.¹¹ This article gave new insights into travel motivations to Ypres and identified spiritual tourism. The article made clear tourists do not only visit the battlefields to

¹⁰ Belletourism

¹¹ Appendix- Newsarticle

commemorate. It reports individuals and groups are travelling to historical places where they hope to find many ghosts such as ruins, dungeons, castles and battlefields. These tourists also visit West-Flanders and especially Ypres. The Great War and its battlefields is a reason of them to believe to find spirits.

The Ghost Club from London is one of those groups, established in 1851 in Cambridge, England. They were searching for evidence against materialism in the past and nowadays search for paranormal appearances. What they exactly try to find is not clear. These tourists just walk around in the hope to experience something extraordinary. The news article explains the tourists want to know more about what happened in Poperinge, a nearby village. The ghost searchers try to find background information about the individuals, who they are and how they died. (Trouw, 25 October 2014)

4.3 Information and promotion

It is obvious battlefield sites are of great importance for historians but the interest of a tourist to visit a site is the result of the person's image of the place. This image is most of the time created by media and publishing and creates a strong 'pull' factor. Television is playing an important role for heritages. The management of the Bosworth Battlefield Center claim that visitor numbers increased when the first showing of a war related series was on BBC. Another big influence on heritage tourism is the publishing industry. A lot of military history related books are sold in the UK and the sales number is increasing since 2001. The 'war books boom' in the late 1920's and early 1930's, was one period of remembrance throughout the past 100 years of remembrance.

Nowadays tourists represent a very big part of the visitor numbers and while commemoration and remembrance remain the key motivations, people have many other reasons to visit the battlefields such as leisure, education and history.

The current generation of battlefield visitors differs from the wartime generation, especially in their lack of direct knowledge and experience of events and contact with those who served in the war (J. Winter, 1995, 2006). This generation is finding information through internet as well as easier access to travel. Contemporary visitation of the Great War battlefield on the Western Front is not well understood, particularly in consideration of the

changes in societies since the major memorials were completed in the 1930's (Winter, 2014).

Cities become well known because of the information technology. West Tour published the sources which are used by visitors to become familiar with the West Front. These sources are:

- 1) Books and articles (51%)
- 2) Television and movies (41%)
- 3) Recommendations of family and friends (39%)
- 4) Website CWGC (26%)
- 5) Tourism websites (17%)
- 6) Other websites and social media (16%)

Notable is social media on the sixth place with 16% while nowadays internet is a great source of information. As the destination mix outlined, Western Europe's technology is developed in such a way many have access to internet and owning their own computer or laptop.

The average age of visitors to the West Front is 54 years. Half of the visitors are between 45-65 years old, the rest is divided in younger and older visitors.

	All internet users	Ages 18-29	Ages 30-49	Ages 50-64	Ages 65+
2/1/2005	8%	9%	7%	6%	
8/1/2006	16%	49%	8%	4%	1%
5/1/2008	29%	67%	25%	11%	7%
4/1/2009	46%	76%	48%	24%	13%
5/1/2010	61%	86%	61%	47%	26%
8/1/2011	64%	87%	68%	49%	29%
2/1/2012	66%	86%	72%	50%	34%
8/1/2012	69%	92%	73%	57%	38%
12/1/2012	67%	83%	77%	52%	32%
5/1/2013	72%	89%	78%	60%	43%
9/1/2013	73%	90%	78%	65%	46%
1/1/2014	74%	89%	82%	65%	49%

Figuur 1 Pew Internet, data/trend social media

Seen the many blogs and comments online about visitors to the battlefields, it is clear these people are using internet as well.

4.3.1 Social media

Nowadays social media plays an important role in tourism branding. With 200 million users posting on Twitter and a billion signed up and active on Facebook every month.

Travel is a personal experience but social engagement (online or in person) has a big impacts. The places people choose to visit and the activities they take part in are influenced by current trends, the opinion of friends and the power of social opinion. Social media is an extension of this human drive.

More than 75% of travellers use social networks to find some type of shopping-related deal, while 30% specifically seek out travel-related deals. The influence of what travellers find on social media cannot be underestimated. A survey found that 52% of Facebook users said their travel plans were affected by seeing friends' pictures of trips. Of people who had already made travel plans, only 48% stuck with their original plan after checking out what was being said on social media channels- 33% changed their hotel and 7% altered their entire trip by changing destinations.

Social media is not being used to book travels, neither is it confirmed the media area an effective marketing tool. It is of importance to socialize a traveller's experience across a variety of online travel websites and mobile applications. (Luc Chomé, April 2013)

However, as the social media industry is already developing for a couple of years, it seems that the travel industry is missing the opportunity of real-time interaction between marketers and travellers. For example, if someone is posting online about skiing in the Alps, offer them information on snow conditions and the best après ski that evening.

Engaging with travellers in real-time on social media has huge implications for the travel industry, meaning extra sells as travellers need them (Dimitrios Buhalis).

The most used social media platforms at this moment are Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. However, no organization is taking care of the Social Media platforms. When visiting the Facebook page, the following comment shows up: "this page is automatically generated on the basis of interests of Facebook users and is not supported by a third party that is associated with the subject". Some local citizens are sharing their thoughts on Twitter, but the set-up of a social media platform for tourists would be of great value.

Caroline Winter wrote not many Australians do know Ypres. This would mean Ypres could belong to the "aided awareness" in the literature. This could change when effectively using Social Media opportunities.

4.4 Future developments

Tourism Flanders speaks about a “future market” when talking about the Australian visitors. Tourism Flanders predicts an increase of Australian visitors to the region with +13% between 2013 and 2018. A decline could occur after 2018.¹²

As Mill and Morrison (2012) mention, a varied landscape may draw more visitors than a single great feature. Ypres is on the move and some big projects are on the map.

Costs for developments are high as Ypres has only site attractions. However, 2014 money is invested in Ypres. Mr. Slosse mentioned these investments are not only meant for the commemoration years. The products should also be used for the many years afterwards.

4.4.1 Ownership

Ypres is managed by its the municipality. However, other cooperation companies are important too when it comes to making decisions.

Peter Slosse (Tourism Ypres) provided information about the future of Ypres. In 2016, a strategic plan is going to be developed in order to draw the future perspective for Ypres up to 2020. The main goal of this strategic plan is to discuss how Ypres is going to position itself after the years of commemoration. This meeting is being held by the management of Ypres, The Last Post Association, the Commonwealth War Memorials and tourism Flanders.

4.4.2 SWOT analysis

Internal	<u>Strengths</u> → Location → History	<u>Weaknesses</u> → Not diverse in tourism → Not well-known/aided awareness
External	<u>Opportunities</u> → More outdoor activities (overnight, sports)	<u>Threats</u> → Competitors in neighborhood-battlefields North France and other in West Front → Generations are becoming older

¹² Figure 4

4.5 War-distorted destination life cycle

In tourism research, the relationships between war and tourism are becoming more important. Traditionally, war or the threat of war was assumed to have negative influences on tourism. The researches until the nineties still adhered negative outcomes for tourism. However, a different perspective came some years later from Smith (1996, 1998). He provided evidence that some war-related destinations eventually became extremely popular tourist attractions. These destinations include monuments, battlefields and military cemeteries.

The impacts of a war on a destination can be theoretically displayed in the destination life cycle model. This model of Weaver (2000) is based upon Butler's (1980) and it introduces the idea of a major war.

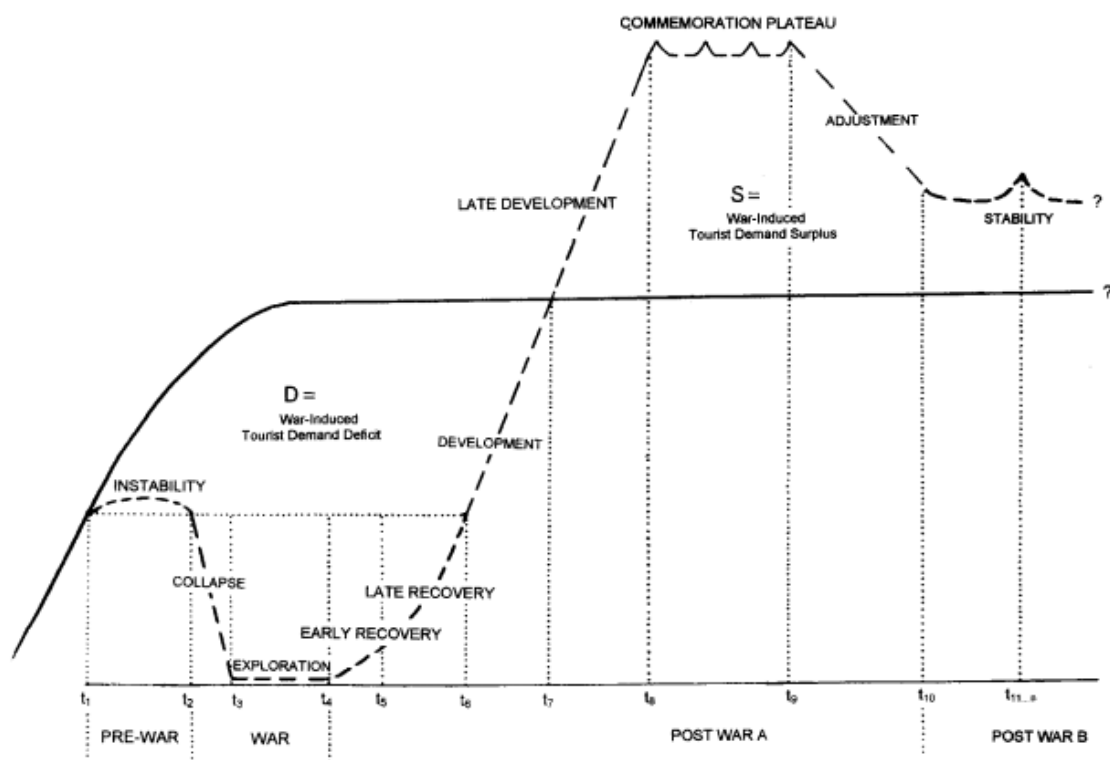


Figure 2. War-distorted destination life-cycle curve

When the war-distorted curve is compared against the S-curve of Butler's model, a shortage of demand can be found in the early phases of the model. After about 30 years, the battle sites change into attractions and the veterans return as visitors, resulting in demand overrun. Weaver suggests four stages: pre-war, war and the two post war stages.

Before the First World War, Ypres was a farming village with no tourism industry. The city itself was still made up of very old buildings and was the largest market place in Belgium with its good location which contains infrastructure, a river and canals. It is interesting to know that German officers posing as tourists visited Ypres on cycling tours around the area before the war. Some of the information they gathered was believed to have been passed to German intelligence for use in planning troop movements in this part of Belgium. (Great War U.K.)

The city came into the **pre-war phase** in which “instability” stands for Butler’s “stagnation”. This is the stage visitors begin to judge a trip to the destination involving levels of risk. This stage is only added to the model if a war really breaks out.

The war stage is often marked by the formal declaration of war. This stage is described as “collapse” as it is far more dramatic than Butler’s decline stage. The exploration phase starts when there is no tourism at all or just some extremist adventurous tourists. The curve stays low for a period of time because the WTO World Tourism Organization does not recognize military personnel as tourists. However, these explorers may still engage in tourism because of their patrol activities in buildings, viewing of existing attractions. Notably is that the longer the war, the more service men, the more tourism return visitors and popularity of the destination.

In the **post-war stages** the war ended and tourist numbers start to increase. These tourists especially consist of family members of missing soldiers, adventure tourists, opportunists and others. At this moment travelling to and within the area is supported by recovery attempts. Locals offer services to these visitors and the early recovery has begun. In the late development the family members are not included in tourism anymore because only few of them return. The battlefields are too dangerous without tourism facilities at this moment. The first post war stage is a time-constrained period wherein veterans are visiting the area. Once the veterans have passed away, the second stage begins that has an open ended possibility. Approximately 20 years after the war, older former soldiers begin to have a family life-cycle in which overseas travel to the battlegrounds of their youth become feasible and psychologically tolerable.

For Ypres, it took a bit longer to develop tourism. Lately, since 10-15 years it all became easier to travel with improved air transport and lower prices. Since 2000, international tourism numbers to Ypres are increasing.

At this moment, Ypres is in the commemoration stage. Australian's are looking for their roots: where did their over grandparents fought and or spend their last days? They are there not only to commemorate, but also to find a piece of their history to give sense to their own lives.

The visitors from Australia are a mix between commemoration visitors and those who are interested in history. The age of these visitors varied between third generations or even farther. A personal story of a backpacker in a bed and breakfast around Ypres, was told by a young man, in his early twenties. He was looking for information about the place his over grandfather has fought. For this reason, he was volunteering in the neighborhood in exchange for food and a place to sleep. On a website for reviews, is written by an older man, around his 40's who was visiting Ypres with his friend who was looking for family bonds as well.

According to the war-distorted destination life cycle model, after approximately 20 years after the war, older former soldiers begin to have a family life-cycle in which overseas travel to the battlegrounds of their youth become feasible and psychologically tolerable. This would mean the tourism industry would start increasing for Ypres around 1940. However, this was the period the Second World War broke out. This has interrupted the developments in Ypres. Only since last thirty years the interest in battlefields are increasing. This means the interest started very late, around 1985. It seems like the First World War was a little bit "forgotten" by the mass and the developments of the media brought it into the public attention again. It took Ypres 40 years to rebuild the city in its original state.

According to the model, tourism should decrease and stabilize after the commemoration years. However, Tourism Ypres is not expecting this decrease as tourism was already growing towards 2014. It is expected tourism numbers will adjust to the situation as how it was before the commemoration phase, or even grow.

Conclusion and recommendations

This thesis was being conducted to give insight into the main research question:

“To what extent is Australian tourism in Ypres expected to change as from 2018 onward?”

The five most important outcomes are being concluded.

1) Commemorative and WW1 tourism interesting target groups

Commemoration is an important travel motivation. While the First World War is already 100 years ago, many tourists are still visiting the battlefield grounds in and around Ypres. The interest of the Australian traveller to the Western Front is growing. Since last 10-15 years it became a lot easier to undertake international travel due to improvements in the airline industry. Nowadays, 7300 Australians are yearly visiting Ypres with an increase of 35% this year 2014 as part of the commemorations.

2) Exceptional role of Australian tourism in Europe and Ypres

Commemoration plays an exceptional big role within Australia as they see their efforts in the First World War and especially in Gallipoli as the establishment of their nation. This bond called ‘mate ship’ is strengthened by the ANZAC legend. There are two reasons for the Australian tourist to make the long journey to the area of Ypres. The first reason is to understand and learn about the history of Australia. The second reason is for family bonds. Australian forefathers have fought and died in the Great War and to honor and commemorate them, they are visiting the Western Front. Both kinds of tourists are part of battlefield tourism.

3) In contrast to the War-distorted destination life cycle model, tourism in Ypres is expected to increase after 2018

As 2014-2018 are the commemoration years in Ypres, tourism offices are expecting an increase in the total number of visitors from previously 350.000 to 500.000 yearly, during the commemorations. As Australian troops were entering Ypres in 1917, Tourism leper expects to welcome more Australians in 2017.

After 2018, tourism is expected to decrease according to the War-distorted Destination Life Cycle Model. However, interviews with tourism experts conclude something else. They see the Australian market as an upcoming target market and after 2018 tourism numbers in Ypres are not expected to decrease more than before 2014.

4) Developments besides or after commemorative tourism

Battlefield tourists are taking 90% of the total visitation to Ypres. Without remembrance tourism, Ypres would probably just a random village with trade possibilities because of its location. Tourism would be minimal, 10% is visiting for other reasons such as outdoor activities. However, battlefield tourism is even increasing in the last years and tourism experts do not expect a decrease in visitor numbers. Battlefield tourism will remain the main reason for visiting Ypres. However, Australians are staying relatively short in Ypres. To extend their length of stay and match their interests, outdoor activities should be developed.

5) Lack of social media platforms and promotion

Ypres is not making actively use of social media. Nowadays the developments are already far and the customer is seeking for real life contact with tourism organizations while visiting an destination.

In conclusion, the following recommendations are provided for Tourism Ypres in order to plan future tourism developments.

→ Social Media

In order to promote Ypres, it is important for the marketing department of Tourism Ypres to start with social media platforms. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are famous social media at this moment which can reach a lot of potential visitors.

→ Diversity

Commemorative tourism might be the main tourism flows, a diverse destination could extent an tourist's length of stay. The development of outdoor activities such as sports (bicycle routes) and campsites will also fit the interests of the Australian tourist. These activities could be developed by local tourism organizations in order of Tourism Ypres.

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Appendices

Photos



Figure 1- New Zealand Monument



Figure 2- "A Soldier Of The Great War"

RAMPARTS CEMETERY, LILLE GATE
Split by War

First World War		Army		Air Force		Navy	
		Known	Unknown	Known	Unknown	Known	Unknown
	United Kingdom	153	0	0	0	0	0
	Australian	11	0	0	0	0	0
	Canadian	10	0	0	0	0	0
	Indian	0	0	0	0	0	0
	New Zealand	14	0	0	0	0	0
	South African	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	188	0	0	0	0	0

Figure 3- Ramparts Cemetery

Figures and facts

B. THE AUSTRALIAN MARKET IN FLANDERS

1. Key figures

Table 3: Total foreign and Australian market in Flanders 2013

	Overall total foreign travellers	Australian travellers	% Australia	Ranking Australia market
arrivals	6.488.545	45.555	0,7%	19th
overnight stays	13.742.727	100.516	0,7%	19th
length of stay (nights)	2,1	2,2	-	-

Source: VISITFLANDERS based on GDS

! this is excluding Australian overnights in rental accommodations at the coast. They are not included in the regular statistics of the commercial accommodations in Flanders.

2. Distribution within Flanders

Table 4: The Australian market in Flanders by region 2013

	arrivals	%	overnights	%
Flemish region	25.501	56%	57.075	57%
Brussels region	20.054	44%	43.441	43%
Flanders	45.555	100%	100.516	100%

Source: VISITFLANDERS based on GDS

Figure 4- The Australian Market in Flanders

Australië is belangrijkste Commonwealth land

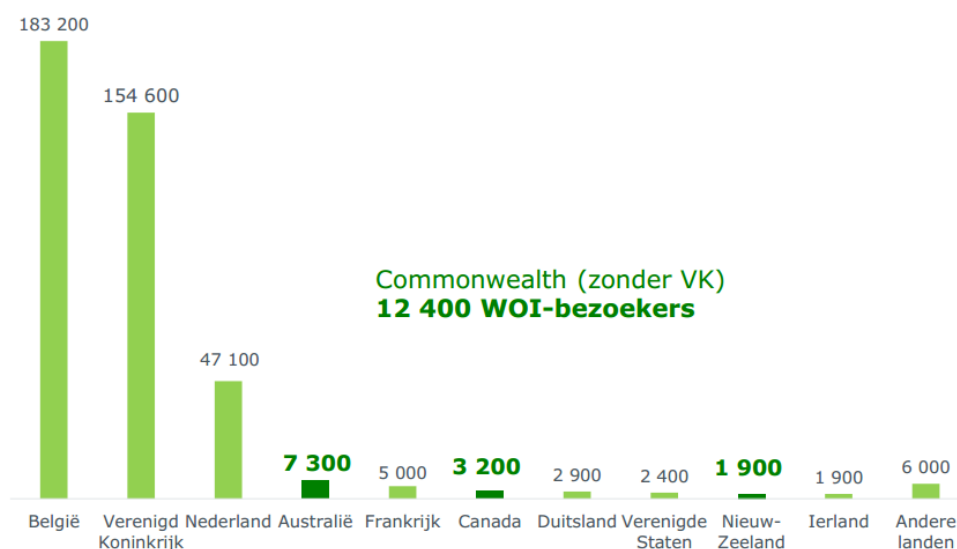


Figure 5- Importance Australia

Grafiek 1

Evolutie van het aantal WOI bezoekers in de Westhoek, 2006-2013

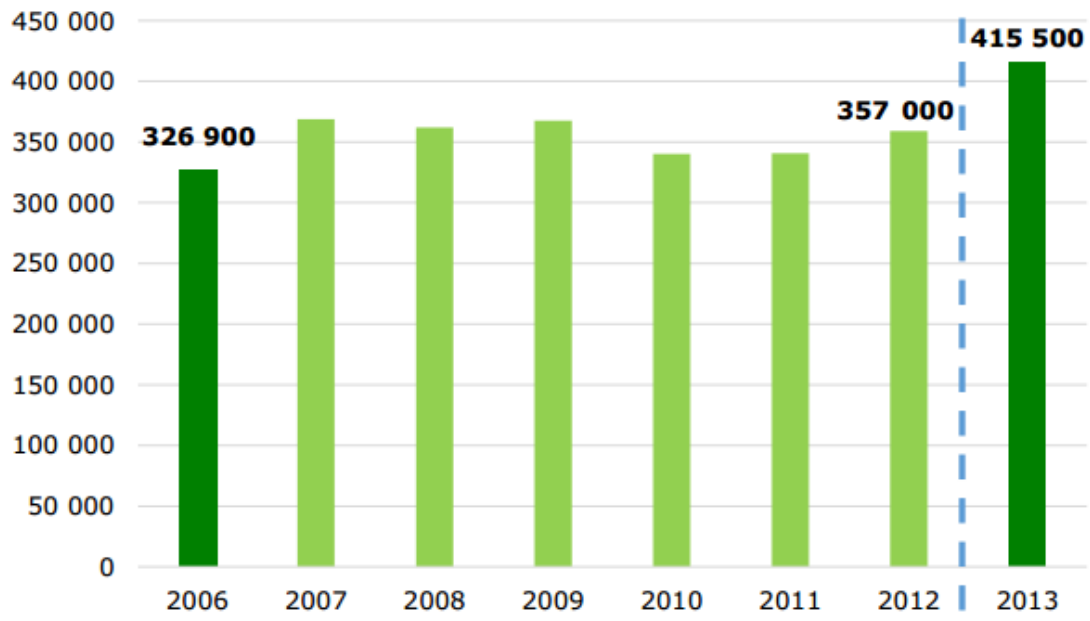


Figure 6. Increasing WW1 tourism in West-Flanders

Periode 07/13-06/14	Westhoek		Noorden van Frankrijk	
	%	Volume	%	Volume
Binnenland	44,1	243 000	21,9	77 000
Buitenland	55,9	308 000	78,1	274 000
België	-	-	3,7	13 000
Frankrijk	1,2	6 000	-	-
Verenigd Koninkrijk	37,2	205 000	49,9	175 000
Nederland	11,3	62 000	1,8	6 000
Australië	1,8	10 000	7,2	25 000
Nieuw-Zeeland	0,5	3 000	2,2	8 000
Canada	0,8	4 000	5,1	18 000
Duitsland	0,7	4 000	2,0	7 000
Verenigde Staten	0,6	3 000	1,8	6 000
Ierland	0,5	3 000	0,8	3 000
Ander land	1,4	8 000	3,8	13 000
Totaal		551 000		351 000

- WH: meer Belgen en Nederland
- NFR: weinig Fransen, meer Australië en Canada

W

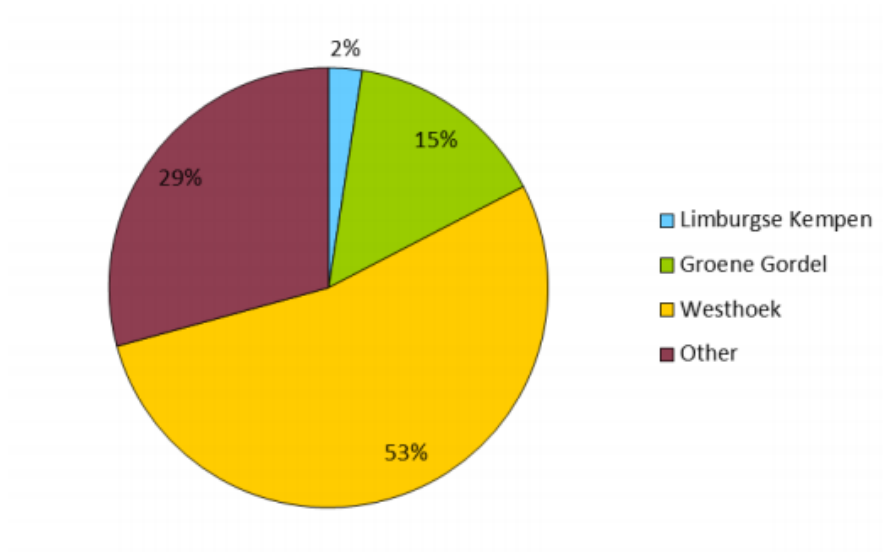
Figure 7- Increase Australian Tourism

Table 11: the Australian market in the Flemish countryside, 2013

	overnights	%
Limburgse Kempen	340	2%
Groene Gordel	2.074	15%
Westhoek	7.400	53%
Other	4.064	29%
Flemish countryside	13.878	100%

Source: VISITFLANDERS based on GDS

Figure 16: Australian overnights in the Flemish countryside, 2013



Source: VISITFLANDERS based on GDS

Figure 8- Overnights

Grafiek 15

Type bezoeker bij individuele WOI bezoekers in de Westhoek naar herkomst, in %, 2013

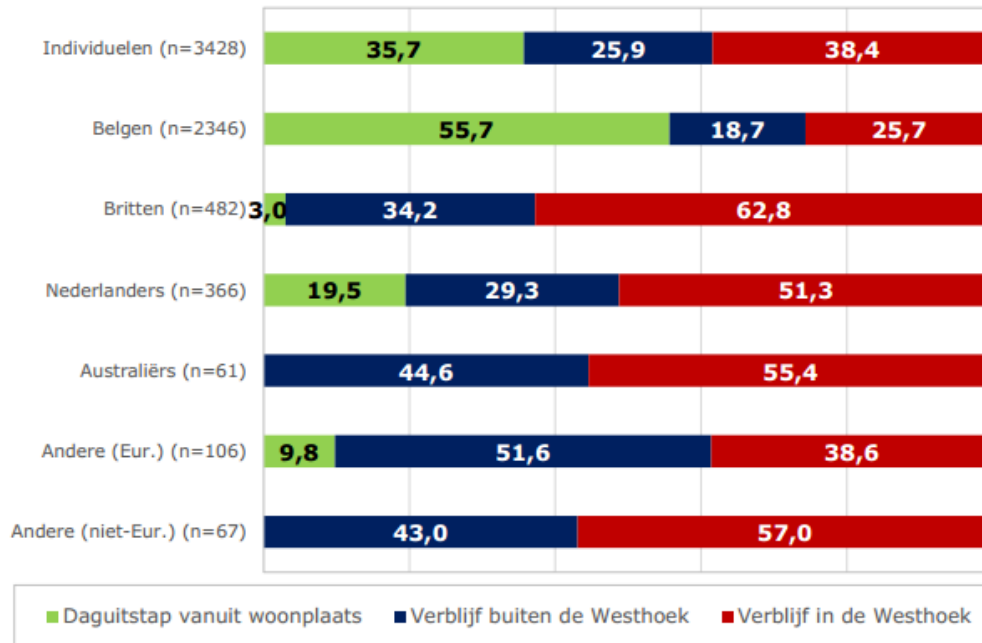


Figure 9 Individual visitors and stays

Grafiek 39

Verblijfplaats in de Westhoek van de individuele bezoekers naar herkomst, in %, 2013

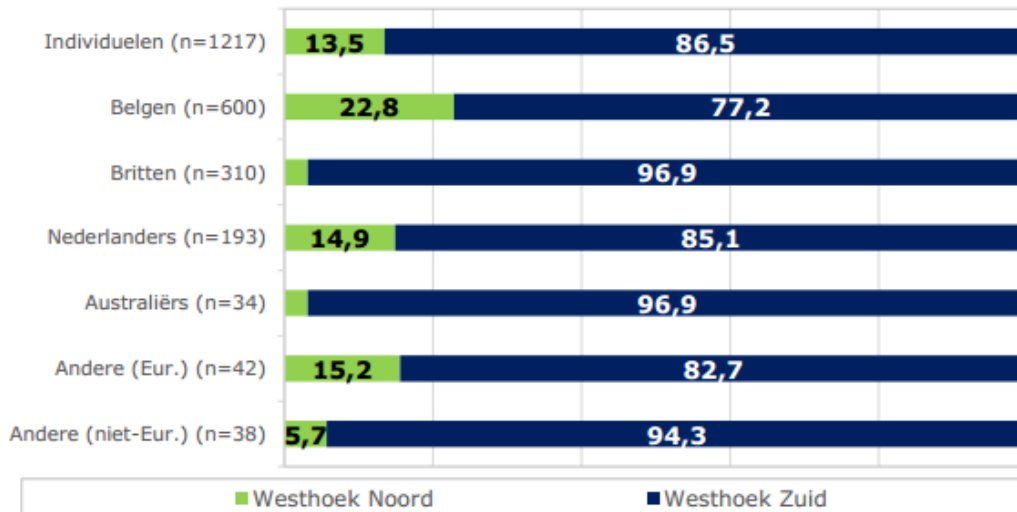


Figure 10 Residence

Grafiek 51

Aantal personen in het gezelschap bij individuele bezoekers naar herkomst, in %, 2013

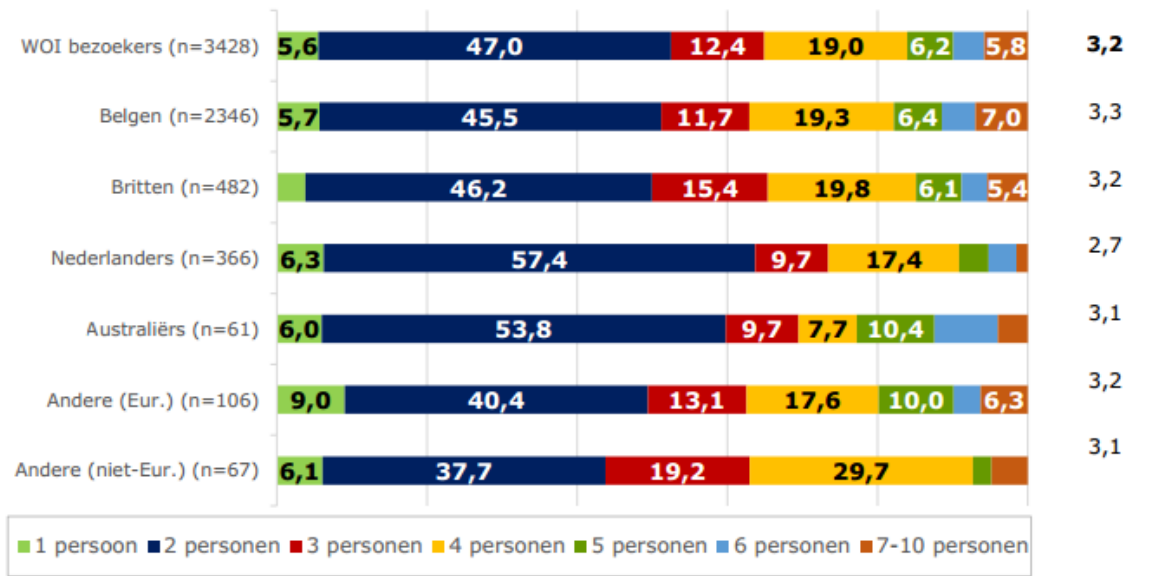


Figure 11 Travel composition

Belang van WOI erfgoed voor de keuze van de Westhoek als bestemming bij individuele bezoekers naar herkomst, in %, 2013

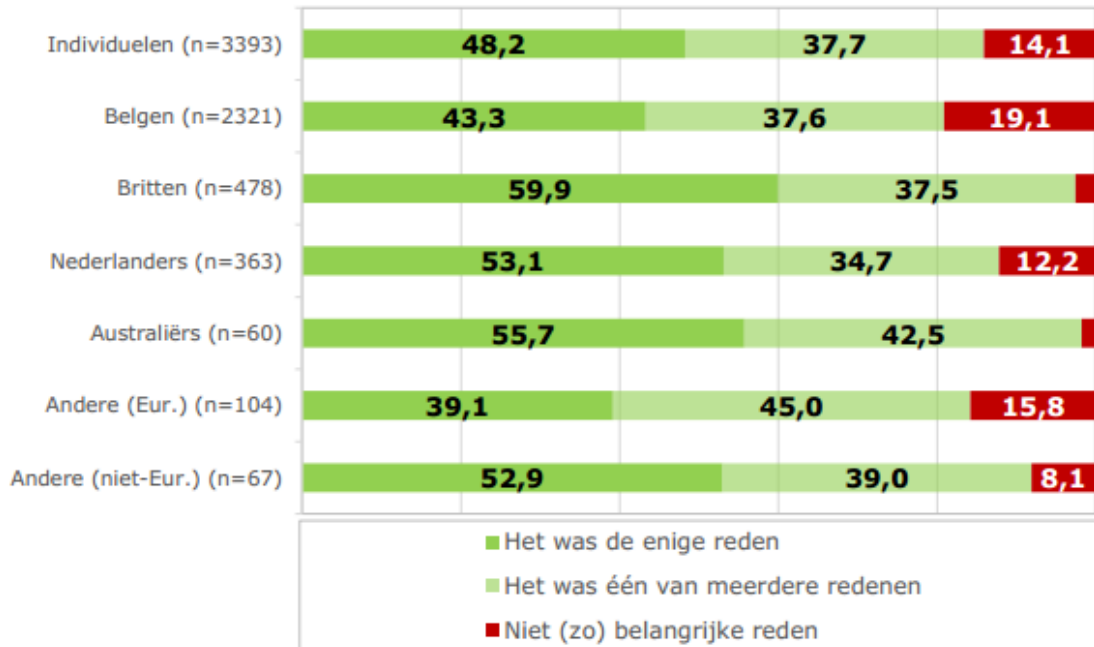


Figure 12- Reasons for visit